Updating *Aistear*

Written submission template for organisations, groups and individuals

This template is intended to help you (and your colleagues) develop a written submission in relation to Updating *Aistear*. Please e-mail your completed submission to aistearsubmissions@ncca.ie

Individual submission details

Name	
Date	
E-mail	

Organisation submission details

Name	Kate O Sullivan
Position	
Organisation	Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
Date	
E-mail	

Do you consent to this submission being posted online including your name and organisation*?

Yes X No

Please provide some brief background information on your organisation (if applicable).

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission ('the CCPC') is the statutory body responsible for promoting compliance with, and enforcing competition and consumer protection law. We strive to improve consumer welfare across the economy by enforcing over 40 legislative instruments, including product safety legislation.

Our aim is to make markets work better for consumers. To achieve this we work to influence public debate and policy development, grow public understanding of the importance of open and competitive markets, promote competition and highlight the interests of consumers.

Please email your submission to aistearsubmissions@ncca.ie

We have a specific statutory role in financial education in *"providing information in relation to financial services, including information in relation to the costs to consumers, and the risks and benefits associated with the provision of those services, and promoting the development of financial education and capability."*[1]

The CCPC fulfils its statutory role in the development of financial education and capability by delivering financial education programmes, conducting research and through the implementation of a three-year Financial Well-being Strategy. The CCPC's financial education programmes include:

- Money skills for life – a workplace financial education programme;
- Money Matters – a programme on personal finance for Junior Cycle teachers and students; and
- Money Counts, which provides resources for the Leaving Cert Applied.

The remainder of the template includes two sections. Section 1 invites your overall comments and observations on *Aistear*: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Section 2 is structured according to the Principles, Themes and Guidelines for Good Practice. Each section is briefly summarised as a support for working on the submission.

[1] Section 10(3)(j) of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014.

Section 1

Please outline your overall comments and observations on updating *Aistear*: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

The CCPC believes that financial education and interventions are required on an ongoing basis throughout a consumer's life to help them make good financial decisions and to develop good behaviours and skills around their money. It is clear from international evidence that this should begin as soon as possible in a consumer's life, starting in early childhood. A Money Advice Service study in the UK, carried out by Cambridge University, found that adult money habits can beset by the age of seven[2]. In addition, the evolving nature, sophistication and digitalisation of financial markets means that consumers are being offered a variety of increasingly complex financial products. Regulation is designed to protect consumers in these markets, however consumers' engagement with financial products requires that they understand a range of potentially far reaching implications of entering into often long term transactions. This further highlights the need for receiving financial education as early as possible in a consumer's life.

Therefore, the CCPC is of the view that financial education should be more explicitly included in Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework to help Aistear achieve its goal so that "all children can grow and develop as competent and confident learners within loving relationships with others". At the moment money is referenced in a learning goal under Aim 1 of the theme *exploring and thinking* as an example of a measure that children should develop an understanding of. In the view of the CCPC money should be called out as a specific learning goal under this theme to support the development of key skills and numeracy from a young age.

Financial education complements the wider focus on literacy and numeracy across the education system in Ireland. In the '[Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life' Strategy 2011 – 2020]' published by the Department of Education and Skills, it is identified that numeracy is not only the ability to use numbers and to add, subtract, multiply and divide, but also "encompasses the ability to use mathematical understanding and skills to solve problems and meet the demands of day-to-day living in complex social settings". An interim review of this Strategy, together with new targets relating to early childhood, was published in March 2017, including the goal to "improve the oral-language competence of very young children in early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings and their readiness to develop early mathematical language and ideas".

Financial education aligns with many of the principles and themes in the current Aistear framework and may indeed already be taking place in early education at the moment through the initiative of certain practitioners. However, the CCPC believes that a greater focus on financial education in the framework would not only help children develop vital skills and behaviours, but would also support practitioners in being able to deliver effective financial education and also for parents to be able to support their children developing financial skills.

The CCPC also made a submission to the NCCA in 2020 on the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework which recommended the inclusion of financial education in the primary curriculum from junior infants to 6th class. The inclusion of financial education in both Aistear and the primary curriculum and subsequently through to junior and senior cycle would provide a basis for children to develop skills needed to make good financial decisions as young people and adults later in life. If financial education becomes a formal part of the primary curriculum, it should also be part of Aistear to facilitate positive transititions to primary school, which is called out as an aim of the government's *First 5* Strategy.

A greater focus on financial education in Aistear and the provision of financial education supports and resources for practitioners and parents would also fit in with the *First 5* Strategy in terms of its vision of "those providing services for babies, young children and their families will be equipped to contribute to their learning, development, health and wellbeing" and community contexts that "will help babies and young children make the most of their early years and fulfil their potential". In addition, it would supporta focus on high quality Early Learning and Care experiences.

Research and evidence

In 2018, the CCPC published a study 'Financial Capability and Well-being in Ireland' . The purpose of the study was to better inform policy and practice in the areas of financial capability and well-being. The study, which was the first of its kind to be undertaken in Ireland, examined the behaviours and circumstances which influence financial decision making and well-being. It quantified the extent to which consumers in Ireland are able to meet all of their current financial needs comfortably and their financial resilience for the future. The study provides important insights into financial capability and well-being in Ireland and how it could be further improved.

Financial well-being is defined in the study as ‘the extent to which someone is able to meet all their current commitments and needs comfortably and has the financial resilience to do so’. The concept of financial capability is wider than measures of financial literacy and is comprised of ‘the behaviours and approaches to financial decision making that influence someone’s financial well-being’. Those behaviours and approaches are influenced by a number of factors, including the level of education that a person has attained, the degree to which they received financial education as a child, and underlying attitudes to saving, spending and borrowing. More broadly, the economic literatures on capabilities and human development have increasingly provided insights into the ‘core sets of skills that explain the capacities of persons to function’ and pursue a ‘flourishing life’.

The CCPC study examined two specific measures of financial education; whether respondents reported that their parents had discussed managing money or saving with them when they were a child, and whether they were taught about managing money or saving when they were at school or college. The results showed a positive link between formal financial education and improved financial well-being.

The positive effect of having received financial education at school was also evident in terms of meeting financial commitments and improved saving behaviour. Being taught about money in school or by parents and guardians increased saving capability. This is particularly pertinent as active saving was identified as one of the critical behaviours contributing to improved financial well-being. This is important in the context of Aistear, as parents need to be supported in teaching their children about money.

The study recommended that curricula be designed for schools and colleges to teach children and young people of all ages about the importance of saving, living within your means and exercising spending restraint. To underpin this, the study recommended that formal education should also seek to shape attitudes to spending, saving and borrowing as well as addressing the important issues of curbing impulsivity, exercising self-control and not just living for today.

In addition to the CCPC’s study, there is a wide body of international evidence to support the introduction of financial education from early childhood level. In particular, the Money Advice

Service Study in the UK (2013) as previously mentioned outlined that adult money habits can be set by the age of seven. This points to the need for early financial education before the age of seven. The study looks at the value of many of the principles which are evident in the Aistear Framework, such as play-led learning. A 2019 Money and Pensions Service study also looked financial capability of four to six year olds in the UK and found that their understanding about money primarily comes from home and family, developed by everyday experiences; school lessons meanwhile provide necessary mathematical skills and role play scenarios to cement learning.

Further support for the introduction of financial education at a young age is set out in several policy recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) dating back to 2005. The 'Recommendation on Principles and Good Practices for Financial Education and Awareness' stated that "financial education should start at school and that people should be educated about financial matters as early as possible in their lives".

The European Commission and OECD plan to develop a youth financial competency framework to complement the adult framework that was launched in 2022. This is expected to be launched in 2023 and should be considered in terms of what competencies are laid out in early childhood.

CCPC support for implementation

The CCPC would welcome the opportunity to work with the NCCA, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and any bodies involved in supporting financial education in the early years. The CCPC is committed to providing support and resources for practitioners and parents in delivering financial education in early childhood and working with providers of professional development for practitioners. As mentioned at the outset of this submission the CCPC has a number of school programmes and have worked well with Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) in developing and improving these programmes. In addition, in 2021 we developed a Parents' Hub and have plans to further develop the hub this year and into the future.

Section 2

Principles of *Aistear*

Aistear is based on 12 Principles of early learning and development. Each principle is presented using a short statement. This is followed by an explanation of the Principle from the child's perspective. This explanation highlights the adult's role in supporting children's early learning and development. The Principles can be accessed

Please give your feedback in relation to updating the Principles of *Aistear*. Please indicate what is working well with the principles and what might need to be enhanced or updated. Many of Aistear's existing principles tie in well with financial education and would support financial education being rolled out in early education. This is particularly the case with active learning and play, and hands-on experiences. The study from the Money Advice Service mentioned in Section 1 underlined the importance of play-led learning. The study focused on teaching children behaviours, habits and skills around money rather than specific financial knowledge. It found that teaching young children explicit forms of financial knowledge per se is likely to be ineffectual in shaping or changing their behaviours. Instead it found that basic approaches and skills modelled by "significant adults", such as parents or teachers, are likely to be significant levers in instilling habits and practices. In addition to this, the principles of equality and diversity and the child's uniqueness should be taken into account when considering financial education. These principles are particularly important for practitioners in supporting the child's development of financial skills. Practitioners should have the flexibility and the confidence in delivering financial education in a way that is respectful and recognises a child's unique abilities and circumstances. The 2019 Money and Pensions Service study on financial capability of four to six year olds mentioned above found that child-centric influences may impact positively or negatively on a child's financial capability potential. Therefore these factors, such as the child's age/stage of cognitive development, gender, the inquisitve nature of the child, the child's academic attainment level and any particular educational needs, should all be taken into account when providing financial education.

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Section 3

Themes of *Aistear*

Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework presents children's learning and development using four Themes. These are:

1. Well-being
2. Identity and Belonging
3. Communicating
4. Exploring and Thinking.

The themes describe what children learn—the dispositions, attitudes and values, skills, knowledge, and understanding. Each theme begins with a short overview of its importance for children as young learners. The theme is then presented using four aims. Each aim is divided into six learning goals. Aistear's Themes can be accessed

Please give your overall feedback in relation to the themes of *Aistear*. Please indicate what is working well with the themes and what might need to be enhanced or updated.

In respect of the four current Aistear themes, *exploring and thinking* is most closely linked to financial education. The theme of exploring and thinking is about children making sense of the things, places and people in their world by interacting with others, playing, investigating, questioning, and forming, testing and refining ideas. One of the learning goals under Aim 1 of this theme is to enable young children to develop an understanding of concepts such as measures (weight, height, volume, money and time). The suggested activities all use play and real-life experiences as learning opportunities, such as providing play money in the fruit and vegetable shop and helping the children to make a price list. The CCPC believe this is positive in terms of connecting money to life experiences and allowing children to begin to understand the concept of money. However, money should also be called out as a specific learning goal under the three other aims in this theme along with age-appropriate sample activities. For example,according to the UK Money and Pensions Service, between ages three and four many children can recognise the difference between coins, understand that things cost different amounts of money and understand the importance of keeping money safe. These type of age-appopriate learning goals could be included to develop children's financial skills.

The 2013 Money Advice Service study, referenced in the sections above, identified that there are opportunities to support a child's capacities to defer gratification, to understand the 'future' in concrete terms and to talk about their understanding and new knowledge, which underpins their self-regulation. These concepts should be reflected in the learning goals around money.

Financial education can also be seen to be connected to the theme of *well-being*. Money is not specifically called out in this theme at the moment, however financial education is very closely connected to the stated aim of the *well-being* theme in Aistear, which is developing as a person and helping children to become resilient and resourceful and to learn to cope with change and situations in which things go wrong. Age-appropriate learning goals around money should be added under the well-being theme. In addition to developing healthy and positive attitudes to nutrition, hygiene, exercise, and routine, children should also develop healthy and positive attitudes to money to support their well-being.

Section 4

Guidelines for Good Practice

Aistear has four sets of guidelines, focusing on different aspects of practice:

1. Building partnerships between parents and practitioners
2. Learning and developing through interactions
3. Learning and developing through play
4. Supporting learning and development through assessment

These describe how the adult can support children's learning and development across *Aistear's* principles and themes. *Aistear's* Guidelines for Good Practice can be accessed here

Please give your overall feedback in relation to updating *Aistear's* Guidelines for Good Practice. Please indicate what is working well with the guidelines and what might need to be enhanced or updated. Parents' involvement in children's financial education is key. This has been shown in the CCPC's Financial Capability and Well-being Study and other international evidence, such as the UK Money Advice Service's research from 2013 mentioned above. Therefore, it is important that partnerships are built between parents and practitioners to facilitate this in early childhood. As mentioned above, a 2019 Money and Pensions Service study also looked financial capability of four to six year olds in the UK and found that their understanding about money primarily comes from home and family, developed by everyday experiences; school lessons meanwhile provide necessary mathematical skills and role play scenarios to cement learning. Providing resources and support for parents in teaching their children about money is very important and has been shown to have positive effects on parents' and children's experience of money. In the UK parents are offered free webinars for parents/carers to help them talk to their children in an age appropriate way from the age of three up to 11. The programme started off as a pilot in Wales delivered through two existing parenting programmes. The evaluation report of the pilot found that parents who attended the programme reported that their children showed better capability in terms of understanding of handling their own money and being able to save. In

addition to reporting an improvement in their children's financial capability, parents also reported a positive impact on their own attitudes and behaviour around money management.

Through Aistear parents should be given opportunities to proactively support their child developing financial skills and their financial well-being now and in the future. Practitioners also have an important role in supporting parents to do so, sharing information and resources with them on age appropriate ways to teach their children about money.

Data Protection

The NCCA fully respects your right to privacy. Any personal information which you volunteer to the NCCA will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality, strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Acts. If you require further information related to data protection please visit https://www.ncca.ie/en/privacy-statement or you can contact the NCCA's Data Protection Officer at dpo@ncca.ie.